

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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DEPARTMENT PASS TO NIDA
FOR AMBASSADOR VANCE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SNAR

SUBJECT: DRUG ABUSE ACUPUNCTURE TREATMENT PROGRAM

1. SUMMARY

DURING THE APRIL EA NARCOTICS CONFERENCE IN KUALA LUMPUR, DAVID ERNST OF STATE, DR. JEAN PAUL SMITH OF NIDA, AND THE CONGEN'S NARCOTICS COORDINATOR DISCUSSED POSSIBLE US FUNDING FOR THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSED PILOT ACUPUNCTURE TREATMENT PROGRAM. MR. ERNST HAD RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THE PROJECT FOR US FUNDING, AND DR. SMITH WAS TROUBLED ABOUT THE SIZE AND NATURE OF THE PROJECT. WE HAVE SINCE HAD EXHAUSTIVE DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THESE POINTS WITH THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT (HKG) NARCOTICS COORDINATOR AND OTHERS INVOLVED. ON THE BASIS OF THESE DISCUSSIONS, WE BELIEVE THE PROJECT IS NOW SIZED AND SHAPED IN SUCH A WAY AS TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR US SUPPORT AND WE URGE ITS REVIEW AND APPROVAL FOR FUNDING. END SUMMARY.

2. A FEW DAYS AGO HONG KONG MEDIA CARRIED A REMARK BY AN UNIDENTIFIED HKG OFFICIAL THAT HONG KONG HAD FOR TWO YEARS BEEN UNSUCCESSFULLY SEEKING USG SUPPORT FOR AN IMPORTANT DRUG ABUSE TREATMENT PROGRAM. THE REMARK WAS PROBABLY FROM UNCLASSIFIED

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AN OFFICIAL HIGH UP IN THE HKG MEDICAL AND HEALTH DEPART-

MENT. THE POINT IS THAT THE REMARK, REFERRING TO THE ACUPUNCTURE PROGRAM, IS FACTUAL, AND IS THE MORE SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE THE HKG DOES NOT OFTEN ASK FOR ANTHING OF THE USG (OR FROM ANY OTHER GOVERNMENT FOR THAT MATTER). WHEN THE HKG DOES ASK FOR SOMETHING OF ANOTHER GOVERNMENT, IT IS BECAUSE IT REALLY NEEDS IT AND REASONABLY EXPECTS TO GET IT. THE ACUPUNCTURE PROPOSAL HAS BEEN SUBMITTED TO WASHINGTON FOUR TIMES, AND EACH TIME HAS BEEN REJECTED FOR A DIFFERENT REASON.

3. THE ACUPUNCTURE PROJECT IS, THEREFORE, NOT A NEW PROJECT, NOR IS ACUPUNCTURE TREATMENT FOR NARCOTICS ADDICTION A NEW TREATMENT FORM. BUT EVEN THOUGH IT GIVES PROMISE OF BEING CHEAP, FLEXIBLE, AND EFFECTIVE, ACUPUNCTURE TREATMENT HAS NEVER BEEN ADEQUATELY TESTED. HONG KONG IS THE PLACE TO TEST IT BECAUSE HONG KONG HAS THE INTEREST, PLENTY OF WILLING PATIENTS, AND THE NECESSARY TREATMENT AND EQUIPMENT EXPERIENCE. HONG KONG IS ALSO THE RIGHT PLACE BECAUSE: IT HAS A MAJOR NARCOTICS PROBLEM WITH A PERCENTAGE ADDICT POPULATION AS LARGE AS ANY IN THE WORLD; THE HKG LEADS ALL OTHER ASIAN COUNTRIES IN RECOGNITION OF ITS NARCOTICS PROBLEM AND IN DETERMINED EFFORTS TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT; HONG KONG'S POPULATION IS CHINESE AND PRODUCTION, PROCESSING, SALE, AND CONSUMPTION OF NACOTICS IN EAST ASIA IS PRIMARILY A CHINESE ACTIVITY. HONG KONG IS RIGHT FOR ALL THE ABOVE REASONS PLUS THE FACT THAT A SUCCESSFUL PILOT ACUPUNCTURE PROGRAM IN THE LABORATORY OF HONG KONG COULD RESULT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ACUPUNCTURE TREATMENT PROGRAMS THROUGHOUT SOUTHEAST ASIA. IF THIS HAPPENED, WE COULD EXPECT MORE PROGRESS IN SEA IN REDUCTION OF ADDICTION, TRAFFICKING, PRODUCTION, AND DIVERSION TO THE US.

4. WITH REGARD TO THE CONCERNS OF NIDA'S DR. SMITH ABOUT THE SIZE AND NATURE OF THE PROJECT, THE HKG AUTHORITIES HAVE AGREED TO A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT CHANGES TO THE PROJECT PROPOSAL ALREADY SUBMITTED TO NIDA. THE COST WILL BE CUT IN HALF TO \$100,000 AYEAR, OR A TOTAL OF \$200,000 FOR THE WHOLE TWO-YEAR PROGRAM. TO REACH THE LOWER FIGURE, THE IN-PATIENT WARD WILL BE ELIMINATED AND THE OUT-PATIENT ACUPUNCTURE DETOXIFICATION CLINIC RETAINED. SPECIFICALLY, TREATMENT

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GROUPS (C) AND (D) WILL BE COMBINED AND GROUPS (E), (F), AND (J) WILL BE ELIMINATED. THE TREATMENT GROUPS WILL BE REDUCED IN NUMBER FROM 100 TO 75. FOLLOW UP OF PATIENTS WILL BE CUT BACK FROM TWO YEARS TO ONE. ON THE BUDGETARY SIDE, HEAD-QUARTERS STAFF WILL BE REDUCED TO THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR AND THE CLINICAL PATHOLOGIST, THE IN-PATIENT WARD STAFF ELIMINATED, AND THE OUT-PATIENT CLINIC STAFF REDUCED IN RELATION TO THE SMALLER NUMBER IN THE TREATMENT GROUPS.

EQUIPMENT COSTS WILL BE REDUCED TO FIT THE REDUCED PROGRAM AND A NUMBER OF RECURRENT CHARGES WILL BE ABSORBED BY THE HKG.

5. IN ITS NEW FORM THE PROPOSED PROGRAM IS LEAN AND ATTRACTIVE. IT IS TIME FOR A REAL TEST OF ACUPUNCTURE EFFECTIVENESS AND IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE FOR THE USG TO USE THIS PILOT PROGRAM FOR ITS FIRST INVOLVEMENT IN A MAJOR TREATMENT PROGRAM IN EAST ASIA. SUCH A PROGRAM WILL PROVIDE SOME BALANCE TO OUR CONSIDERABLE EXPENDITURES ON ENFORCEMENT AND WOULD PROVIDE FOR EXPENDITURES FOR HUMANITARIAN PURPOSES INSTEAD OF FOR POLICING. WE THINK A MODEST US INVESTMENT IN A PROGRAM OF THIS TYPE IS A SMALL PRICE TO PAY FOR ITS POTENTIAL DIRECT BENEFIT TO OUR ASIAN ALLIES IN THE ANTI-DRUG CAMPAIGN AND ITS INDIRECT BENEFIT TO THE UNITED STATES.

6. THE CONGEN RECOMMENDS THE ADJUSTED PROGRAM FOR REVIEW AND FUNDING APPROVAL AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE TIME. THE HKG NARCOTICS COMMISSIONER SAYS THAT THE PROGRAM WILL BEGIN WITHIN WEEKS OF USG APPROVAL.
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